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Subject: RE: Per pur telephone conversation- This is Sunday's editorail
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Thanks Rock

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From: Owens, Rock (CAO) [<mailto:Rock.Owens@cao.hctx.net>]
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Chronicle Editorial:

Poisoned water

San Jacinto River waste pits are leaking toxins that a hurricane could aggravate.

Houston Chronicle Editorial

July 8, 2016

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water, Harris County announced last week that dioxin has been leaking from waste pits along the San Jacinto River into residents' private wells. First there's flesh-eating bacteria in the Gulf, then possible lead in Houston's public school drinking water and now this.

Then again, the "this" isn't exactly anything new. Those waste pits were first discovered by state health officials in 2005 as the feculent remains of a 1960s-era papermill. The passage of time and groundwater pumping eventually caused the pits to become partially submerged in the river, which then became a new home to the pits' litany of hazardous substances, including highly carcinogenic dioxin.



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Now the San Jacinto River is one of the most toxic sites in the United States and those leaked poisons have been blamed for sickening nearby animals and residents, including Jackie Young - Miss Rodeo 2013 and the current leader of the San Jacinto River Coalition. Her plight to bring attention to the waste pits and the struggle to hold accountable Waste Management, McGinnes Industrial Corp. and International Paper - the current owners of the company that originally ran the toxic dump - were documented by Houston Chronicle editorial cartoonist Nick Anderson in his 2014 series: The San Jacinto River In Peril (<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/>).

Despite years of fighting, warnings and fears, Harris County Public Health has only just started testing local drinking water for dioxins - the first government agency to do so, according to the Houston Press. It is part of a slow push in the right direction to clean up the San Jac pits. Last month, the state and county announced plans to spend \$10 million on restoration projects, funded by settlements with McGinnes and Waste Management. But people don't need new parks or boat ramps - we need a guarantee that the leaking poison has been contained. The caps that were supposed to contain the waste pits, which the Army Corps of Engineers said would survive "unusual catastrophic events," were found at the end of last year to have significant holes.

Now, as the Gulf anxiously anticipates another hurricane season, regional leaders are starting to grasp how a storm surge could spread the carcinogenic waste all throughout the Houston area and Galveston Bay.

That image of a hurricane striking the San Jacinto Superfund site should have all of us wondering how many chemical storage facilities across the Houston area would become part of an uncontrolled toxic flood if we're hit by the Big One. The fact of the matter is that we don't know, and City Hall doesn't want to say. Mayor Sylvester Turner's administration has tried to block the release of information about local facilities that handle dangerous

chemicals. Janice Evans, the mayor's spokeswoman, said that is was "a matter of homeland security."

It is an ironic twist given that Turner himself called for more transparency and oversight after a fire at a Spring Branch warehouse in May sent mysterious pink chemicals down Spring Branch Creek that left dead fish in the wake.

City Hall needs to make that information public and city council should push the mayor's hand. Meanwhile, our elected officials in Austin need to spend the next legislative session working on coastal storm surge protection that will keep these chemicals safe from hurricane-driven floodwaters.

Shark bites and bizarre bacteria may make the headlines, but the real terrors sit in storage tanks waiting for everything to go wrong.